

12
THE CATALYTIC POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Massachusetts Home Missionary Society,

AT ITS ANNIVERSARY, IN LOWELL INSTITUTE, BOSTON,

MAY 25, 1852.

BY EDWARD HITCHCOCK, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF AMHERST COLLEGE.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.

1852.

At a regular Quarterly Meeting of the Executive Committee of the
Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, held on the 8th June, 1852 :

“ *Voted, unanimously,* That the thanks of the Society be tendered
to the .Rev. Dr. HITCHCOCK, for his Sermon delivered at their late
Anniversary Meeting in Boston, and that he be requested to furnish a
copy of the same for publication.”

Attest,

J. S. CLARK, *Secretary.*

DISCOURSE.

MATTHEW XIII. 33.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO LEAVEN, WHICH A WOMAN TOOK,
AND HID IN THREE MEASURES OF MEAL, TILL THE WHOLE WAS LEAVENED.

It is not often that the discoveries of modern science elucidate and make more impressive the language of Scripture. The text, however, is one of these rare instances. It describes, indeed, a very familiar process,—that of bread-making,—which, as a practical matter, has been known from very early times. But the principles on which some parts of the operation depend, are even yet among the most recondite in chemical science. Something is known of them, however; and although the person who is acquainted only with the process of leavening bread, must be struck with the peculiar force and appropriateness of this illustration; yet the man acquainted with its rationale, cannot but realize it more deeply. I shall feel justified, therefore, in spending a few moments in scientific details, which would be appropriate to the chemical lecture room; nay, I should feel condemned, if I did not take this course, because I am confident that I can thus make the beauty and force of this passage more

obvious and impressive. And in doing this, and introducing a few technical phrases, I hope my hearers will not charge me with pedantry, till they have heard me through. Gladly would I avoid these scientific details, could I in any other way bring out the full strength and appropriateness of the text.

The phrase, *kingdom of heaven*, in this passage, demands a passing exegetical notice. The radical idea contained in it, as well as in the cognate expression, *kingdom of God*, is that of dominion or government. Even when it means heaven itself, as it sometimes does, this original idea clings to it ; for in heaven the most prominent manifestation of the Deity will be through his government. In the New Testament, however, this phrase often designates the reign of the gospel dispensation ; and hence it very naturally is sometimes put for the principles of the gospel. Such seems to be its precise meaning in the text. Christ evidently meant to say, that the truths of the gospel, when brought into contact with society, operate like the leaven of the bread-maker, when mingled with the dough.

And how, precisely, does this operate ? Chemistry, to some extent, informs us. It is an example of those changes in bodies, which, for the want of a better name, is called *Catalysis*. This term embraces a great variety of decompositions and recompositions, which are not explained by the common principles of analysis and synthesis. In catalysis, the mere presence of a certain body, among the particles of another, produces the most extensive changes among those particles ; and yet the body

thus operating, is itself unaffected. Thus, a stream of hydrogen poured upon a piece of platinum will take fire, that is, unite with the oxygen of the atmosphere through the influence of the platinum; and yet that metal will remain unaltered.

In cases of catalysis, more analogous to the example referred to in the text, the substance itself, which is the agent of the change, is in a decomposing condition. This is the case with leaven, or, as it is sometimes called, ferment or yeast. One sees, from the commotion among its particles, that a change is going on in its internal condition, and that new compounds are forming out of its elements. Introduced in that state into the meal, it communicates a change to the whole mass, analogous to that which it is itself experiencing. This is called fermentation. In bread it is not allowed to proceed very far, but is arrested by the heat of the oven.

It is found that the remarkable power of leaven to change the character of compounds, depends on a peculiar principle which it contains, called *Dias-taste*. This substance is so powerful in its action, that one part of it, mixed with two thousand parts of starch, will change the whole into sugar in a few hours.

How it is that so small a quantity of one substance should be able to produce such extensive changes in another, thousands of times larger, it may not be easy in all instances to see. But in the case of leaven, we have a probable theory; for, as the particles of the leaven, themselves in the act of change, come in contact with some of the particles

of the body into which it is introduced, they start a similar change there ; and this, communicated from particle to particle, pervades the mass until the whole is leavened. This view is certainly a statement of what takes place ; but if asked *why* such effects should be propagated through bodies by mere contact, I confess myself unable to see.

The history of catalytic changes, then, furnishes us with two principles of importance in elucidating the text. The first is, that it needs but a very small quantity of leaven to produce a complete change in a very large amount of farinaceous matter. The second is, that it is only necessary to start the process of change in one or a few spots in the mass, where the particles of the leaven happen to be, in order to have it permeate the entire heap. It is not necessary that a particle of the leaven should actually come in contact with every particle of the mass. It need only commence a process in one spot, which will spread of itself through the whole, or at least to a great extent.

To return now to my text,—such a power does Christ declare the gospel to possess. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal; till the whole was leavened.* Hence I take for my subject on this occasion, *The Catalytic Power of the Gospel.* I wish to show that wherever that is cast into the dead and inert mass of human society, it shows a quickening, expanding and multiplying power possessed by no other human institution.

In order to avoid misapprehension, let me premise one or two remarks. Because I shall attempt to

show that gospel truth has a mighty power over the human heart, let no one imagine me a disbeliever in the necessity of a special divine influence to give that truth success. In that doctrine, most cordially do I acquiesce ; and when I speak of a peculiar efficacy of the truth, I assume that the conversion of men is *not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*. My only object is to show that the truth, in itself, possesses a peculiar adaptedness to win its way and transform society. And surely it will encourage our efforts, as well as make us feel more deeply our obligations, to learn what an admirable instrument God has put into our hands with which to labor.

Let us now look at the evidence of the catalytic power of the gospel.

In the first place, such a power is derived from the adaptedness of the gospel to human wants.

How well adapted it is to promote the temporal welfare and happiness of man, may be seen by comparing the condition of society in Christian lands with that of heathen and Mohammedan countries. So striking is the contrast, that truly and literally we may say of Christianity, it has *the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come*. But it is mainly of man's spiritual wants, that I speak at this time. For though felt more or less by all, and by many with great intensity, they are met and satisfied nowhere save in the gospel. Yet how purblind men are to this panacea ! They search for remedies every where else. They run the whole round of sensual grati-

fication in the vain expectation of relief ; but they find only a bitter aggravation of their sufferings. They toil for wealth, for honor, for power, and perhaps are eminently successful. But the void in their hearts is only made larger and more painful. They resort to social enjoyments, or to learning, or to splendid worldly enterprises ; but all in vain ; the terrible craving of their nature continues, and, like the cast-out unclean spirit, they *go through dry places, seeking rest, yet finding none*. They resort finally to deeds of charity, to self-mortifications, and to the rites of a religion of forms ; and here they fancy they must find peace. But if they do, it is only a false and a transient peace ; the peace of self-delusion, not the peace of God. And when some trying exigency of life overtakes them, the visor drops from their eyes, and the cheated soul within cries out in anguish for something to lean upon in the hour of suffering and of death.

Such are the vain phantoms which most men pursue through all their days, urged on by the deep, restless, unsatisfied wants of their nature. Nor does one in a thousand fancy that he is walking in a vain show, until God's Spirit open his eyes to see the plague of his own heart. He is amazed and overwhelmed by the view. Such deep and dreadful depravity, pervading his whole nature, he never once suspected. He can live with such a heart no longer. Ah, he sees now what he wants, and prostrate in the dust he cries out, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*. His prayer prevails. He rises a new creature in Christ Jesus. The aching void in his heart is filled,—filled

with divine love and divine peace. He is saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. He has found, at last, the grand panacea which nature could never discover.

“This remedy did wisdom find,
To heal diseases of the mind,
The sovereign balm, whose virtues can
Restore the ruined creature, man.”

During the preparatory process that goes before regeneration, as well as in the act, the peculiar adaptedness of another great doctrine of the gospel to human wants is made most manifest. The man is deeply conscious of having broken the law of God; and when he is made to feel how reasonable that law is, and how holy, he does not see how he can be pardoned. The law only condemns him, but discloses not one gleam of hope. He looks around solicitously for some way of escape. He inquires whether he can, himself, make any offerings to God that will be a ground of pardon. Especially may not the sacrifice of animal life avail? To such sacrifices have men in all ages and countries resorted, either by the promptings of instinct or revelation. And it shows, at least, how general is the conviction of men, that sin cannot be pardoned without some expiation made by a substitute. But a voice from the Scriptures replies, *It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.* The sinner sinks down in despair, at this announcement. How well prepared, then, to receive another, issuing from the same inspired record,—*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.*

Christ being come, a high priest of good things to come, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. The great central truth of a vicarious atonement gradually opens upon his agitated mind. At first, he sees it only dimly and doubtingly. But, ere long, his heart perceives that here is the divine remedy for its otherwise hopeless case. Here, mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace embrace each other. Thus *God can be just, while he justifies the believer.* Faith can doubt no longer. It rushes to the cross, and pardon, peace and holy joy succeed to anguish and despair. The most pressing want man ever experiences,—the desire of forgiveness,—is thus fully met; and ever after the pardoned sinner, addressing his Saviour, exclaims,

“E’er since by faith I saw the stream
 Thy flowing wounds supply,
 Redeeming love has been my theme,
 And shall be till I die.

“Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
 I’ll sing thy power to save,
 When this poor lisping, stammering tongue,
 Lies silent in the grave.”

The character of the Being who made the atonement, is another doctrinal point most wisely adapted to the wants of man. Whatever may be said as to those engaged in intellectual pursuits and accustomed to abstractions, the great body of men have ever associated some material or human characteristic in their idea of God. And the Old Testament, out of regard to this want of human nature, has made

most of its representations of the Deity quite anthropomorphous. But it is in the character of Jesus Christ, that this want is most fully met. In that character the divine and the human are so beautifully blended, as to invite confidence without destroying veneration. Had it been said only that the *Word was with God and was God*, man would feel as if there were an infinite gulf between him and his Saviour. But when it is added, that the *Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*, the idea of a common nature draws us to him, and especially when he calls us his brethren, and declares that he was tempted in all points as we are, for the very purpose of affording succor to them that are tempted, and to stand as our daysman, our Advocate and Intercessor, our hearts can no longer resist the appeal, and we approach the throne of grace boldly, because we know that we have a sympathizing friend to plead our cause. And yet he is an almighty friend, and what more can we ask? No wonder that the heart cleaves to such a Saviour with a supreme and undying love.

“Clothed with our nature still, he knows
The weakness of our frame,
And how to shield us from the foes
Whom he himself o’ercame.

“Nor time, nor distance e’er shall quench
The fervor of his love;
For us he died in kindness here,
For us he lives above.”

It is hardly strange that to the acutest minds, unenlightened by revelation, this world should seem to be a hopeless enigma; or that it should be

looked upon as a state of retribution, and that the half Christian Manichee should imagine two supreme principles, one of good and the other of evil, holding with each other an everlasting war. But there are two doctrines of revelation that solve the dark riddle, and show to the eye of faith the full-orbed glories of the Divine Benevolence behind the thickest clouds. One of these doctrines is, that the world is in a fallen condition, and because sin has entered it, suffering has followed ; so that, in fact, *the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain*. The other is, that God's providence sits watchfully above the whole scene, and so controls every event, that the final result shall be happiness and glory. It is wonderful how these truths resolve the most agitating doubts, and anchor the soul to a rock amid the fiercest tempests of life. Faith does not fear but that infinite power, wisdom and benevolence, will bring order out of confusion, peace out of discord, holiness out of pollution, and everlasting happiness out of temporary misery. She can see how wisely adapted even the evils of life are to the moral discipline essential to a fallen being. And when the tempests howl around, and the billows come pouring over her, it is enough for her to *know that all things work together for good, to them that love God*. She has reached that happiest condition of human existence, unreserved submission to the will of God.

Springing from such a system of doctrines, cordially embraced, there are hopes and consolations such as nothing else can give. All other hopes and consolations fail to satisfy ; but these leave

nothing to be desired. The man does not cease to be interested in this world, but he is more interested in another. The consciousness that his eternal future is safe, makes every blessing the sweeter which he receives on his way thither. And it also lightens every labor and neutralizes every trial. So near to immortal and unalloyed happiness, of how little consequence to him are the short-lived inconveniences he meets in his brief sojourn below ; especially when he knows how necessary his trials and labors are to prepare him for eternal joy ! Oh, if such a man has not within him the elements of happiness, they cannot be found on earth. Daily the manna falls from heaven around him ; and even in the thirsty desert, he can smite the rock, and the cool and refreshing waters will gush out. And he knows that when he comes to the banks of Jordan, the waters, touched by the wand of faith, will divide for his passage.

Such is the wonderful adaptation of the gospel system to human wants. How could it do more to fill and satisfy them. Now my argument is, that whenever men are made conscious of their spiritual wants, and such a gospel is made known to them, it will be eagerly embraced. And if embraced by a few, they cannot but make it known to others ; and thus, if no untoward influences prevent, will the whole mass at length be leavened. It does, indeed, meet with a powerful obstruction in human depravity ; and were it unadapted to the necessities of man, it could make no progress ; but now it has a catalytic power which enables it to find its way through the sluggish mass.

In the second place, man's conscience testifies to the truth of the gospel system, and thus prepares the way for its admission to the heart.

Of all the powers of the human soul, conscience has suffered least from the blasting influence of the apostacy of the race. The corrupt heart is able to make every other faculty its pander and slave ; but conscience always stands erect and unsubdued, ready to lift her voice in defence of the right and to rebuke the wrong. Her mouth may, indeed, for a time, be forcibly closed, and her sensibilities blunted, by the hot-searing iron of iniquity, but her internal vitality remains unaffected ; and when, at length, her liberty and vigor are restored, her retributions will be terrible.

Now it is an interesting fact, that unpervverted conscience is a stern advocate for evangelical religion. Tell an unconverted man that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and his pride and self-sufficiency will resent the charge ; but his conscience knows it to be true. Tell him that with such a heart he could not be happy in heaven, and that, therefore, he must be created anew in Christ Jesus, and his corrupt inclinations will muster a stout defiance against the mortifying truth ; yet the faithful inward monitor often compels him to acknowledge its reality. Hence you will often see the strange anomaly, of a man confessing his utterly lost condition by nature, and his entire unfitness for heaven without a new heart, and yet so bolstered up by pride and self-sufficiency, that he feels little anxiety and makes no efficient efforts to change his condition.

Again, in spite of all the struggles of perverted reason, conscience often compels men to acknowledge the justice of the penalty annexed to sin. Sophistry may enable them to make out a very clear demonstration of the inconsistency between divine benevolence and eternal punishment. But conscience compels them to acknowledge that they deserve it. They know that with such wicked hearts, they could never experience any thing else but punishment, and they are conscious of having done nothing to lay God under obligation to give them a better heart ; so that, without his interposition, eternal misery follows as a natural consequence.

But though thus dependent upon God's grace, conscience will not release them from their obligations to love and serve Him ; for that faithful and keen-eyed observer testifies that their inability arises from a perversion of the powers which God has given them, and not from any natural defect ; and, therefore, they are as much bound to love and obey their Father in heaven, as a perverse child is to exercise filial affection and do service to his earthly father.

In this dilemma, how strenuous an advocate for the doctrine of special grace does conscience become. Instead of pleading the sinner's apology on the ground of inability, and striving to release him from obligation, she charges him with having crippled himself, and therefore as lying under the full weight of responsibility to the divine law. Yet how certain to perish, if the special power of God do not interpose !

In the human conscience, then, we have a pow-

erful instrumentality for the diffusion of the gospel. Once let the leaven of its great principles be brought into close contact with that conscience, and in spite of the hostile influence of pride, selfishness and passion, it will rouse and transform the torpid soul, and make it henceforth alive to duty and to God. That soul will in fact *become a new creature in Christ Jesus, old things having passed away and all things become new*. But such a perfect network of sympathies is human society, that you cannot change the feelings and character of one individual, and not send a like influence into the hearts of those around him. Let one man's conscience be roused to do its office, and his neighbor's conscience cannot be wholly quiet. So numerous are the points of contact between men, that no one can remain long wholly ignorant of a moral change in his neighbor, nor unaffected by it when known. Thus, through the force of conscience, a self-propagating power is imparted to religious reformatations. Once start the process in a particular spot, and conscience will become the catalytic agency to transmit it from individual to individual, we cannot tell how widely.

In the third place, the history of Christianity shows it to be possessed of an extraordinary catalytic power.

Recall to mind the circumstances under which the gospel was first introduced. Its Author, a poor, persecuted wanderer, chose twelve illiterate fishermen for his council, his heralds, his body-guard, and his successors in propagating his system of truth among men. The whole world, too, stood armed

to the teeth to resist its introduction. All its prejudices, its social, political, religious, and even its military power, was ready to be arrayed against the gospel ; and, in fact, all these forces were employed to arrest its progress and to root it out of the world. Ten times, within three hundred years, did the mighty emperors of Rome assail Christianity with fire and sword. And they felt sure of a triumph ; for how could a few feeble, contemptible fanatics, without wealth, power, or influence, resist an array that had conquered the world. But how little did these worldly wise rulers know of the inherent vitality, the self-sustaining, and self-propagating power of the gospel ! So that, in fact, while they supposed they were giving the finishing blow to the system, it was silently and irresistibly working its way into the hearts and affections of all classes of the community, till at length, in the beginning of the fourth century, it became the established religion of the empire.

Perhaps you will say this was the effect of the miraculous agency that was manifested in the church in apostolic times. This might have had some influence, in the first introduction of Christianity ; yet far less, even then, I apprehend, than is generally supposed ; for it is usually quite easy to get rid of the influence of a miracle by imputing it to imposture, jugglery and delusion, as we know was done in those days. But it is not settled whether the power of working miracles was possessed by any after the days of the Apostles ; certainly that power was withdrawn a century or two before the days of Constantine. Nor have we

evidence that there was any thing peculiar in the Divine Influence which was exerted upon the hearts of men in primitive times. It seems to have operated then, as now, according to the established laws of mind, and in proportion to the means employed. Furthermore, we have the testimony of the Bible to the position, that men are no more apt to be convinced by miracles than by the ordinary truths of the gospel; for *if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*. We must, therefore, impute the extraordinary success of the gospel in early times, and in the midst of fiery persecution, mainly to its adaptation to human wants and the human conscience.

In subsequent periods of the world's history, this same experiment has been often repeated. And it has ever been true, that the kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation. No loud trumpets have sounded its advent; no powerful array of means has ushered it in. A few obscure men, without money or influence, and perhaps with little of worldly wisdom or policy, unarmed, save by the Bible and faith, have gone into the arena of conflict, like David to meet Goliath. And so inadequate have the champions and their weapons seemed, that the world have looked upon them with as much contempt and derision as Philistia's giant did upon David. And yet the despised pebble has found its way to the giant's forehead, and the Galilean has conquered.

Take Great Britain, for an example. The conquests of that kingdom by Julius Cæsar, by the

Saxons, the Danes and the Normans, are all on record, and constitute distinctly marked epochs of history. But who can tell us when and how Christianity won its more thorough and enduring conquest, penetrating where the arms of the Roman, the Dane, and the Saxon, could not reach, and converting tribes of the rudest heathen into civilized and Christian men? It is indeed said, that Augustine and a few other monks were once sent as missionaries to Britain; but how feeble an instrumentality to accomplish a work a thousand times more extensive and important than all the conquests to which Britain has ever been subject, or which she has made by her arms since her political existence began. Had there not been an unseen, self-propagating power to carry forward the work, begun only in here and there a spot by humble missionaries, the whole mass could never have been so thoroughly permeated.

The same fact exhibits itself when we compare Christian with Pagan or Mohammedan nations. In the latter, you meet with much more of the external manifestations of religion than in the former. Temples, images, processions, public prayers, and other rites, are rife every where; but, after all, you perceive that little influence, save an injurious one, is exerted in such countries upon the public morals, manners or welfare; yet, in Christian lands, it is manifest that an influence has gone deeper into the public heart and conscience; and hence you find more kindness, amenity and decency, more of civilization and respect for morality and piety. The rude and ferocious elements of human nature are

more tamed and moulded by Christian influences, than by Pagan or Mohammedan.

I believe this is true of all nominally Christian lands, although we must confess that, in many of them, the gospel has been well nigh deprived of its vitality, and little more than its external covering remains. But even there, Christianity exerts a decidedly better influence than the most refined system of human invention. Moreover, we may impute whatever of good moral influence is exerted by Mohammedanism to the principles,—and these are not few and unimportant,—which it has purloined from the Bible.

Again, you will find that just in proportion as Christianity has been corrupted and the Bible is withheld from circulation among the people, will the literary, civil, social and moral condition of a nation be degraded. Suppose you had the power to pass suddenly from such a country as New England, or Old England, or Scotland, into Austria, Russia, Spain, or France. Would you need a geographer to tell you that you were in a land where a withering blight had come over the pure gospel? While you would meet crucifixes, oratories, cathedrals, chapels, and confessionals every where, you would find the Bible nowhere. And while you would hear *te deums* and chanted prayers, and the praises of the virgin and the saints in all places of worship, and on all days and hours, you would listen in vain for unadulterated gospel truth at any time. And while the antiquated walls of monasteries and convents would meet you in every place, the academy and the school-house would be

wanting in all places. And when you became acquainted with the character of the great body of the population in those lands, you could not doubt that the gospel, which you had seen doing so much in the country from which you came, to elevate, enlighten and bless, was here shorn of the lock of its strength, and had been moulded and trimmed to adapt it to systems of superstition, ignorance, intolerance and despotism.

The whole history of the missionary enterprise, foreign and domestic, affords decisive proof of the leavening influence of the gospel. To mere worldly wisdom, the most striking feature of that enterprise is the total inadequacy between the means employed and the expected results. When a man, who has been accustomed to estimate the amount of outlay and preparation requisite in any successful undertaking in commerce, manufactures or agriculture, or who knows the amount of effort necessary in a successful political campaign,—when such a man looks at the very slender instrumentality which the ablest missionary societies employ for the conversion of the world, it seems to him a want of wisdom amounting to infatuation, to go forward. Why, men are more tenacious of their false systems of religion than of any thing else; and yet you send one, or two, or half-a-dozen, plain, powerless men, among twenty or fifty millions, and are disappointed if, in a few years, you do not hear of numerous conversions.

Alike inefficacious do such feeble instrumentalities appear to the heathen and the Mohammedans themselves. And this is one of the grounds on

which missionaries are allowed to pursue their work, unmolested, in countries most hostile to their plans. Imagine, for instance, that the Emperor of China, or the Shah of Persia, or the Sultan of Turkey, should learn that one, or two, or even half-a-dozen, unarmed, inoffensive men, had taken up their abode in Canton, or Oroomiah, or Constantinople, with a view to preach the doctrines of Christianity, and to teach the principles of human science and literature to the young. Do you think that either of these despots would have any fears excited that the established religion of the country was in danger? Would he not treat the suggestion with contempt, and look on the missionaries as deluded men, whose efforts to proselyte would be harmless, and whose literary instructions would be valuable to the empire, and therefore their residence might be tolerated? And if a British minister would be gratified by having these teachers protected, how ready would he be to issue the decree which should place them and their followers on a footing with their other Christian subjects. But let these rulers learn something of the catalytic power of the gospel, by seeing multitudes converted, as if by a mysterious influence, and you would see the sword of persecution unsheathed and martyrs multiplied. And it is mainly because such conversions have not been in general extensive enough to arrest the attention of rulers, that persecutions by the government are so infrequent. I fear that they are yet to put the faith and courage of the church severely to the test. For by and by, heathen and Mohammedan nations will learn that the leaven of the gospel, hid in the com-

munity by the humble missionary, has, unperceived, sent its transforming power through the whole torpid mass, and that their false systems are crumbling into ruins.

A still more manifest example of this mighty though unnoticed influence, is often seen in our own land, when the Domestic Missionary Society sends its benevolent agencies into some waste place where iniquity is triumphant. In such a place are found, it may be, a few humble Christians, but the wealth, the fashion, and worldly influence, are all hostile to the truth; and when the missionary calls around him the few followers of Christ at the prayer meeting and in the church, it only makes matter for amusement and ridicule among others, who, in view of the apparent feebleness of the instrumentality, exclaim, with Sanballat and Tobiah of old, *What do these feeble Christians? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.* But the despised leaven silently operates; God's Spirit comes down to urge the movement forward, and the great mountain that seemed so strong, crumbles down and becomes a plain. The gospel triumphs; decency and refinement of manners takes the place of obscenity and vulgarity; temperance succeeds to drunkenness; peace to discord; thrift and enterprise to decay and poverty; and spiritual religion to errors of every name. Yet so quietly was the change effected, through the gospel's catalytic power, that opposition and skepticism stand amazed.

From this principle of the self-propagating power of the gospel, thus established, we may derive inferences of great importance, and eminently adapted to encourage and strengthen those engaged in the missionary enterprise, whether domestic or foreign. Indeed, since the recent rapid expansion of our population across this broad continent, these terms, domestic and foreign, have become nearly synonymous.

In the first place, this subject should inspire us with strong confidence in the power of divine truth.

The current of worldliness often sets so strongly against the truth, and the means appointed for its diffusion seem so simple and inadequate, that we are apt to be disheartened, and to forget the mighty power which the doctrines of the gospel possess to work their way amid obstacles, and become mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. But when we recollect what that truth has done in time past, how it has transformed whole nations as if by magic, how at this moment, abused and perverted as we know it to be, it makes Christian nations stand out on the world's panorama so conspicuously, and when we think of its wonderful adaptation to the deepest wants of man, and what a stern advocate it finds in the human conscience, and especially how thorough is the renovation of the individual who gives himself up entirely to its influence, we ought to be ashamed of our distrust of its power, and to feel that we have in our hands an instrument which, by God's blessing, can and will create anew and sanctify our lost world. So

that wherever we have an opportunity to bring the gospel in contact with the human conscience and reason, we ought to urge its claims with as undoubted an assurance of its efficacy as a woman exercises when she hides only a modicum of leaven in three measures of meal.

Secondly, the subject is full of encouragement to those who are laboring in weakness with great obstacles and discouragements, in the dissemination of the truths of the gospel

Let them remember that the leaven, when mixed with the meal, seems to be lost, and little or no visible effect is produced, until at length it is found that the whole loaf is thoroughly leavened. Let them remember, too, that the pure gospel, when brought in contact with men's consciences, is as sure to commence a catalytic process there, as good leaven is in the meal, although without special grace it will not result in conversion. Nor will the laborer, perhaps, perceive any good effect produced for a long time, and possibly not while he lives. But moral reformations usually move very slowly onward. It needs time for the leaven to work. And in many cases the sower is not permitted to gather the sheaves. But if they are finally reaped, *he that soweth and he that reapeth will rejoice together*. Let him who is faithful in doing his duty in some barren field of labor, be assured that the truth has never yet failed to manifest, sooner or later, its transforming power. His field of labor may be narrow, and his discouragements many; but let him bear in mind that he has a mighty instrument

to work with, and an almighty God pledged to sustain him.

In the third place, the subject shows the fallacy of the doctrine, that the world is growing worse, and will continue to grow worse, in spite of all efforts to spread the gospel.

The world does indeed abound with wickedness, and often the success of the truth in a place is the occasion of a grosser development of iniquity. But the truth has the advantage, because it meets and satisfies man's highest wants so completely, and enlists in its favor the human conscience. And whence arises this want of confidence in the truth, as an instrument of the world's conversion, among these our brethren, some of whom are missionaries, and yet they do not believe the world can be converted by the gospel, but will continue to grow worse till the Saviour makes a visible display of his power? Have they not felt the power of truth in their own souls? and have they not seen its mighty efficacy upon the souls of others? Do they doubt its ability, when applied by God's Spirit, to convert the world? If the world is growing worse, how happens it that all Christian nations, even where the gospel is dreadfully perverted, are so far superior in character and condition to Pagan and Mohammedan nations? Surely these men forget the catalytic power of the gospel, as developed in history. True, the improved physical, social and intellectual condition of a nation, is far from being its conversion to God. But it is an important prerequisite to that conversion. And it does imply that some in that nation are truly converted; and why is not all this

an earnest of the final and complete triumph of pure religion, if its comparatively few genuine disciples do their duty? For every accession to their number increases their power; and why may not that leavening influence go on till it has reached the world's entire population?

In the gospel, then, you have an agency abundantly adequate to the work; and why then call in miraculous power? for we know that it is a settled principle of the Divine Government, not to work a miracle when established agencies are sufficient.

Finally, this subject should greatly encourage and animate the hopes and efforts of those engaged in the work of missions.

They learn from it that they need not be discouraged, though the common principles by which men judge of the probable success of their enterprises, should show their chance to be small. The fact that they are following a divine command, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, may, indeed, be sufficient to give them courage and perseverance amid powerful difficulties. But it is important, also, to know what an extraordinary instrument they possess for carrying on the enterprise; how it works its way into the hearts of men and silently changes their characters, and the whole aspect of society; and sends down an influence, they cannot tell how far, into generations unborn. *It is, indeed, quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* It takes a stronger hold of society than

all other influences, and abides longer. Its secret energy rouses human society into action, and propagates the catalytic change from individual to individual, from family to family, from community to community, and sometimes from kingdom to kingdom. Nor can the missionary tell, when he deposits the leaven of the gospel in one spot, even though scarcely heeded there, but he has started a process which shall go radiating outwards over a whole continent ; for thus it has often done.

But though thus adapted to cheer the missionary in every land, this principle affords much more encouragement in some countries than in others ; and most of all, on American soil ; to the home missionary here. To prove and illustrate this from the analogies of my text, let us recur to certain facts respecting catalytic operations in nature, which I neglected at the commencement of this discourse.

The essential principle to which I mainly refer, is this : that in order to make leaven, or any other catalytic agent operate, it is necessary that the mass to be leavened should be in a certain state, as to consistency, temperature and permeability. The baker well knows, that it is of no use to hide leaven in a mass of frozen dough, nor unless its temperature is a good deal above the freezing point. So if from any other cause it has become condensed and rigid, the leaven cannot spread itself among the particles, and little or no effect will be produced, even though the leaven be in the best condition.

Apply now these principles to the dissemination of the gospel. Attempt to propagate its truths in a country where Heathenism, or Mohammedanism, or

corrupt Christianity, is firmly established, is sustained by the learned few, and the ignorant and superstitious many, and by wealth and influence ; is linked inseparably to the government, and can show a long list of illustrious defenders. By such causes the false system has been knit firmly together, and is settled down into a hard, impenetrable mass, which resists all change. Without a miracle, you would expect that if the truth should make any headway, it would be slow and difficult. Whereas in a nation where a false religious system sets loose upon the people, and has little social or governmental support, and especially where commerce, education and free principles are breaking up the torpid and indurated mass, the way is prepared for the gospel's catalytic power to show its mighty transforming energy.

Facts now corroborate the truth of these principles. For never has the gospel made rapid progress in any country where a false system of religion has entrenched itself behind the prejudices, the social habits, the pecuniary interests, the splendor of rites and forms, and governmental favor ; and its most signal triumphs have been witnessed where the false system has but a feeble hold upon the public mind, or men have begun to think for themselves. Certain conditions seem necessary, in order that the leaven may work ; nor where these are wanting are we to expect success, any more than that the laws of chemistry will be set aside in the process of bread-making. God does sometimes, indeed, give unexpected success by the power of his Spirit, to show that, after all, the efficiency lies with him. But

such cases are exceptions, which we cannot calculate upon, and are not our rule of judgment or of duty.

From these principles we should confidently infer, that Mohammedanism, and especially Popery, would offer more powerful obstructions to the spread of the gospel than any other systems of error. Hence it is, that while missionary stations are multiplied among the heathen, they are yet so few in the great centres of Mohammedan and Papal influence in Asia and Europe. Nor can we doubt, that long after every heathen pagoda has been converted into a Christian temple,—nay, long after the Bible shall have supplanted the Koran in every mosque and minaret,—will the perverted Christianity of forms, propped up by leagues and bayonets, present its yet unbroken front, to be breached only in the *battle of that great day of God Almighty*.

On the other hand, from these same principles, we infer that nowhere on earth is there such a preparation for the spread of pure Christianity as in our own land. Here we have no inert and indurated mass of dead formalism to break up; no frozen and petrified system of rites and ceremonies to arrest the leavening process; no iron arm of government to check the onward movement. But the genial light and warmth of free institutions and of general education, have brought the community into a state most favorable for receiving the gospel and giving it free course. Wherever faithfully planted, it is sure to communicate and spread its vitalizing influence outward and onward; and if

Christians will only do their duty, they may be sure that the whole land will be leavened.

And here I ought to mention another chemical principle that has a parallel in the condition of our country. Chemists tell us that elements in their *nascent* state, that is, when first produced, unite far more readily than they do afterwards. Now the elements of our social condition are as yet, in a great measure, in a nascent state; and therefore more ready to be operated upon and form valuable combinations than in the old world, where every thing has long since become immovably fixed, either by affinities within or pressure without. Oh how important that the gospel exert its catalytic power upon our population, before that same binding and paralyzing process pass upon them! The wide world does not furnish another field of missionary labor so promising. I mean not by this, that other countries are not open to the gospel, and that missionary efforts should be limited to our own land. God bless these efforts and increase them a hundred fold in every land. But I do mean, that our country preëminently invites and demands efforts for its evangelization. I do mean, that it is a more promising and a more important field than any other on the globe, and therefore calls for every heart and every hand to engage in it.

Do I seem to any to be taking too strong ground? Let me propose to them an experiment, which I sincerely wish all my hearers could try, to test this opinion. Let them take the next steamer across the Atlantic, and in one fortnight they would find themselves on ground very favorable for a compari-

son. They would be traversing lands where state religions exist, with all their pompous and imposing rites and ceremonies, with their exclusive and intolerant spirit, and their hostility to freedom of opinion, and to all that is vital in personal piety. Religion there, is sustained by governmental decrees and by bayonets. Throttled in the embraces of the state, its lifeless form is made use of as a speaking-trumpet, through which are proclaimed, not the doctrines of God, but of man; such as the divine right of kings, the duty of unreserved submission to the government and the church; the infallibility of the church, not of the Bible. The sweet countenance of gospel charity has been changed into that of a persecuting fiend; and the snaky locks of a gorgon cover her head, freezing and petrifying all around. All places are full of religious forms, but alas, to find its power you must search long and deep. The very highways are studded with crosses and crucified Christs, with oratories and images of the virgin, while the towns abound with vast and venerable cathedrals and chapels, full of golden images, splendid paintings, and sacred relics; and the magnificent organ peals along the sounding arches and thrills the wondering soul, as the gilded priests chant their te deums, their pater nosters, and their ave marias. You enter the convent at the sound of the vesper bell, and a thousand white veiled nuns are kneeling around you, and gorgeous music lends enchantment to the vesper hymn. Every where in the streets you meet the cassocked priest, and often the imposing procession, while the multitudes uncover their heads as it passes. In

short, to an American, accustomed to the simplicity of our modes of worship, the most prominent feature in European lands, save in the glorious fast-anchored isle,—and even there to great extent,—is, that in spite of the most imposing externals, the whole is little more than heartless formality,—a wretched substitute for the bread of life. Yet when he sees how firmly rooted is this system in the pride and prejudice, the worldly interest, the interests of despotic governments, and a swarming priesthood, and how it is woven into the very texture of society, he cannot but feel that little short of a miracle will be required for effecting a revolution. With what deep interest, then, after only a few weeks of such observation in those lands, will the heart of the Christian American turn towards his own country. In the hallowed language of our gubernatorial proclamations he will exclaim, “God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts!” Save her religion from the base alloy of formalism, superstition and intolerance. Save her system of education from the blighting touch of aristocracy and priestcraft. Save her free institutions from the savage ferocity of the ignorant and unprincipled many, and the grinding oppression of the despotic few. Save her, for the sake of the country. And God save that whole country for her own sake, and the sake of the world. For to save her, is to save the world; and to lose her, is to lose the world.

It needs only a short pilgrimage through the old world to excite such sentiments as these in the heart of a Massachusetts American. And his prayer to God will be, that he may live to go back

and labor harder than he has ever done, to build up the cause of pure religion, of learning, and of freedom, in that land which he has now learnt to be the only one on earth where, for the present, this indissoluble trio of noble institutions has any chance of wide-spread success. And if this man learns only this lesson by his foreign tour, it is worth all the sacrifice and expense of ten thousand miles of voyage and travel.

What a noble work, then, is committed to our hands! What an inviting field has the Home Missionary Society before it! The man who enters it finds society not only in a state more favorable for casting in the leaven of the gospel, but that the influence of his labors is felt almost to the ends of the earth. Let him be laboring to build up some obscure waste place, say in Massachusetts. He may seem to be unnoticed and neglected. But he is doing his part towards sustaining and perpetuating the free and the religious institutions of the country, and therefore, in fact, the eyes of many millions in Europe are watching his labors with deep interest, and with earnest prayers for his fidelity: for their chief hope of the world's emancipation rests on the success of civil and religious liberty here. And if the true gospel be not preached and received among us, free institutions must for the present fail. In preaching the gospel, therefore, in the obscurest nook of the land, a man may feel that he is working for the whole country, nay, for the whole world. Indeed, Providence is sending representations from the whole world to our doors. By multitudes they pour in upon us from

every European land, and swarms of Asiatics are crowding into the valleys of California. So that in fact we may become missionaries to Papists, Mohammedans, Boodists and other heathen, without leaving our own shores.

What responsibility, then, attaches to the name and position of an American. When, in foreign lands, I have met kings and queens, dukes and marquises, counts and viscounts, they appeared to be men and women of only the ordinary stature; but when I first set my foot again upon our own shores, and met free-born Christian Americans, it seemed to me that I was looking upon giants, because God has given them the power of giants to bear up the pillars of freedom, of education, and of religion, and to cast down the pillars of ignorance, superstition and despotism.

If your patience is not quite exhausted, allow me to add one or two further suggestions, growing out of a scientific view of the text.

In order that leaven should operate effectually, or even operate at all, it must itself be in an active condition and of a proper temperature. In proportion as its thermometric state is too high or too low, or if there be an admixture of inert substances, or its own decomposition be slow or partial, will its catalytic power be diminished.

So it is with the moral leaven of the gospel. If its purity be marred by an admixture of error and vain speculation, or if it be cast into the community distorted by ignorance, or disfigured and blackened by the fires of fanaticism, or enveloped in the ice of formalism, feeble will be its influence, if indeed it

do not become a nuisance. Instead of proving the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation, men will see in it only the weakness of human wisdom and strength, overpowered by the superior might of human depravity.

Now it is this perverted and deficient gospel, that too often finds its way into our waste places, into our new settlements, and among the floating population of our cities. It has the name of Christianity, and usually contains some truth, but a larger proportion of error ; so that while it produces traces of religion, it shows more of fanaticism, or bigotry, or self-righteousness and formalism. How important then, that into fields, thus grown over with briars and weeds, a pure and holy gospel should be carried by pure and holy men. Those engaged in sending this gospel abroad, through our Home Missionary Societies, should have their piety in that active condition, without which their prayers, example and efforts, will only deepen the spiritual slumbers of ignorance and sin. And still more important is it, that the direct agents in this work should preach an unadulterated gospel, not only by their voices but by their lives.

Finally, astonishing as is the power of leaven to change the mass into which it is cast, there is a limit to that power. One part may, indeed, transform two thousand parts of the meal ; but if the latter be increased much beyond that proportion, not only will all the excess remain unaffected, but it will operate to prevent the leaven from producing its full effect. Nay, it may nearly or quite destroy that effect. Hence if the leaven and the mass to

be leavened be enormously disproportionate, the best leaven may become powerless.

Now to apply this principle to Home Missionary efforts, I fear, my brethren, that this is just what we are doing in our country. The mass to be leavened by the gospel is out of all proportion to the means employed. In 1850 we built between four and five thousand miles of railroad at an average cost of \$50,000 per mile. During that same year we expended only enough upon domestic missions, to construct five miles of railway. And railways are only one branch of American enterprise out of many. How exceedingly small, then, must be the proportion of our pecuniary means devoted to an enterprise which transcends all others in our country in importance. For if that fail, all others will be smitten with a deadly blight. Irreligion cannot triumph without trampling in the dust our systems of general education, of public enterprise and freedom, and crushing the hopes of liberty through the earth. Our hopes, therefore, must centre in the Home Missionary cause. We make enormous outlays, and labor without weariness to advance our worldly schemes, and that, too, where the means employed have little or none of the catalytic power inherent in the gospel; and where the results bear no proportion in importance to the work of Home Missions. God has committed to American Christians the noblest enterprise which he has given to the present generation in any part of the world. And he has put into our hands an instrument with which to accomplish it, a thousand times more efficacious than those employed in commerce, in man-

ufactures, in agriculture, or indeed any ordinary art or pursuit. How dwarfed must be our piety, how low our standard of patriotism, how contemptible our philanthropy, if we do not supply the means necessary to prevent the leaven of the gospel from being overpowered and neutralized by ignorance and depravity. Ought we to be satisfied to expend \$50,000,000 annually for railways, and only one thousandth part as much in working out the grandest problem in politics, in education and religion, of this generation ! Oh, if any cause has motives powerful enough to rouse men to action, it is this. If we enter into the work resolutely and cheerfully, with humble reliance on God's help, we are sure of success. And success will bring such a day of brightness and blessing to this wide continent, as never yet has visited any other. Though the deluge of ignorance, despotism and false religion, should engulf every other land, ours shall stand high above the flood and beat back its angry waves ; and, ere the close of the present century, one hundred millions of Christian freemen shall here be found richly enjoying those social, political, educational, and religious rights and privileges, which God originally gave, but which man has hitherto unrighteously withheld.

